

Dual Bluffs On Lithuania

U.S. and Moscow Try To Preserve Summit

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WASHINGTON, April 3 -- Eduard A Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, arrived in Washington today for meetings with President Bush and Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d

and Administration officials said he faces some tough talk on Lithuania later this week.

News Analysis On a day when a group of Lithuanian legislators met with a senior Soviet official in Moscow in an effort to reduce tensions, and Mr. Shevardnadze said that an "honest dialogue" with Lithuania remained his Government's goal, Administration officials nonetheless spread the word that he would be told in blunt terms that United States is losing patience with Soviet tactics to counter Lithuania's declaration of independence on March 11.

Moscow's Parades of Armor

"For us," one official said, "these will practically be one-issue meetings. For weeks now, we've been supporting, supporting, supporting, and they've been provoking, provoking, provoking. That can't last forever."

While suggesting several times that he wants to avoid violence, President Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union has engaged in intimidation tactics, including almost daily parades of armored vehicles through Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, the seizure of dozens of Lithuanian deserters from

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the Soviet Army and the expulsion of foreign reporters from Lithuania.

Mr. Shevardnadze is reported to be carrying a message from Mr. Gorbachev to Mr. Bush. The Americans hope that it will contain fresh assurances on Lithuania and that those, and the talks here this week, will make it possible to set a firm date for the summit conference tentatively scheduled for Washington in June.

So far, President Bush has managed to hold at bay those who would like to see him take a more pro-Lithuanian position; he even persuaded Representative Newt Gingrich of Georgia, a conservative Republican, to issue a public endorsement of White House prudence.

A House resolution urging the Administration to begin normal diplo-

matic relations with Lithuania "at the earliest possible time" is scheduled for passage this week, but like a similar measure passed by the Senate earlier this month, it carefully avoided direct criticism of Mr. Bush and made no explicit call for immediate recognition of the new Lithuanian government.

A Testing Week for Bush

Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana, a Republican member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed the optimistic view today that Lithuania's chances of eventual independence were better if Washington could keep intact its improved relations — and hence its leverage — with the Soviet Government.

But the situation is extremely ticklish for Moscow and Washington.

In a sense, the two leaders are playing parallel games, with Mr. Gorbachev trying to bluff the Lithuanians into easing their demands for independence so he can avoid similar moves by other restive republics, and Mr. Bush trying to bluff the Russians into backing off so that he can avoid choosing between Lithuania and continued good relations with the Soviets.

An End to Painless Progress

So this is a testing week for Mr. Bush, who will meet with Mr. Shevardnadze Friday, after the Soviet minister has had two days of talks with Mr. Baker. At the same time, the West German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, will be in town for talks on the complicated question of German reunification.

For the first 14 months of his term, Mr. Bush has been able to stand back and watch as one American goal after

another has been realized. But that period of almost painless progress may be coming to an end, in the view of some students of East-West relations.

"Things aren't always going to fall into the President's glove every time he sticks it out," said Prof. Marshall Goldman of Harvard University. "He'll have to run around the field a little, and that could cause him problems."

Prof. Robert Legvold of Columbia University argued that no matter how hard Mr. Bush pushed him, Mr. She-

The U.S. spreads the word that its patience on Lithuania is thin.

vardnadze was unlikely to go beyond "a politely responsive posture without any real assurances that Gorbachev will stop the harassment." Mr. Legvold said there would be little Mr. Bush can do except continue to maintain a rhetorical position that satisfies backers of Lithuanian independence in this country and a substantive position that satisfies Mr. Gorbachev and his allies.

U.S. Public and 'Captive Nations'

"Only when Gorbachev has taken a final step, like declaring martial law or a state of emergency, are we likely to see real toughening of Washington's position," Mr. Legvold said.

Two moments in postwar history are much on the minds of foreign-policy planners these days: the Hungarian revolution of 1956, which the United States supported with words but no action, and the shooting down of an American U-2 spy plane in 1960, which prompted Nikita S. Khrushchev to abort a planned summit conference with Dwight D. Eisenhower. Neither is a precedent anyone wants to follow.

Asked whether the Bush-Gorbachev summit meeting was in any way threatened by the situation in Lithuania, a Bush adviser said, "I think it's 80-20 that it takes place on schedule, but both sides are obviously getting a bit jumpy on the subject, and it could all go wrong if there's any suggestion that Gorbachev is still thinking about using force there."

Mr. Bush, who spent the day in the Midwest, discussed the Lithuanian situation at length with several people today, and one of them said that he "exhibited a considerable degree of confidence" that despite the present difficulties, he could keep alive the process of winding down the cold war.

Mr. Bush knows how closely his fate has become entwined with that of Mr. Gorbachev. But he also knows that the American public would not tolerate in the Baltic countries, among the "captive nations" that have had a grip on opinion here for decades, any Soviet move even remotely resembling that which Mr. Gorbachev sanctioned, and Mr. Bush tacitly approved, in Azerbaijan last year.

Much may depend on the President's and Mr. Baker's success in getting that point across to Mr. Shevardnadze.